

Bayside U3A

UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Offices: Beaumaris Senior Centre
84 Reserve Road, Beaumaris (behind the library)

Old Brighton Court House
63 Carpenter Street, Brighton (next to the Town Hall)

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Mail: P.O. Box 7269 BEAUMARIS 3193

Email: baysideu3a@gmail.com **Web:** baysideu3a.org.au

2024 TERM DATES

Term 1 29th January - 28th March 2024
Term 2 15th April - 25th June 2024
Term 3 15th July - 20th September 2024
Term 4 7th October - 13th December 2024

NEWSLETTER

February 2024



Beaumaris Office:

Monday to Friday 9:30am - 2:00pm

Brighton Office

Monday to Friday 9:30am - 12noon

FROM THE PRESIDENT

DAVID HONE



Term 1, 2024

Once again we had a smooth start to our Bayside U3A year which was officially opened last Monday by Mayor Fiona Stitford. This very useful tradition was established to keep the wonderful partnership we have with the Bayside Council alive and well.

Warwick Harding and the MME sub-Committee made sure that our opening event was a big success. We took the opportunity to make the Mayor aware of the urgent need to upgrade the Beaumaris Community Hall to give Bayside a modern presentation venue for 200 people.

Sue Steele and the office team are once again to be congratulated on making it all happen for the start of 2024. We have wonderful tutors and volunteers but we will only continue to thrive if more people are willing to run our U3A. Think not what the U3A can do for you, but what you can do for the U3A.

May I remind our current wonderful team of Volunteers that: 'We don't pay, so no, you can't quit.' Our U3A had a great 2023 with 1,599 members, 163 Courses and a Speaker Programme full of variety and large audiences. We had a calendar of key events with more social events including a monthly Happy Hour at the Hampton RSL. I mentioned in my last message the important work being done by our succession planning sub-committee, chaired by Sandra Groves whose work will come to fruition at the AGM.

2024 will see us continue to expand our membership and hopefully the number of courses we run. The Speaker Programme is planning further great talks, beginning in March and the MME Committee are producing a calendar of a variety of key events to be held across the year. We are looking at holding monthly social events after the success last year.

I finished my informal talk at the opening with two quotes which I think are worth repeating:

'The purpose of life is not to be happy - but to matter, to be productive, to be useful and to have it make some difference that you have lived at all.' (Leo Rosten)

and

'Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve.... You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.'

(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

David Hone

NEW COURSES AND ACTIVITIES

Social Croquet

Friday 15th March from 4.30pm at Brighton Croquet Club. Enrol at [Let's Pay Croquet Course: 24SOC007](#)

Come along for a fun evening. Start practising your croquet skills at 4.30pm, followed by a friendly competition from 5pm with prizes for the winners. Afterwards stay on for BYO dinner and drinks in the clubhouse. Participants are asked to bring their own food, beverages and wine glasses. All croquet equipment will be provided. The \$15 cost covers green fees. Please wear flat soled shoes to avoid damage to the lawns.

Write Your Memoir

Tuesdays 11.15am at Beaumaris Senior Centre from 16th April

An 8-week course for the person who has always wanted to find the initiative and enthusiasm to write about their own life and times. It may be for posterity and publication, for family history, or just for the pleasure of drawing on memory and finding meaning in the way our lives have been shaped. Enrol at [Write Your Memoir Course: 24LIT018](#)

WAITING LISTS

Many classes have waiting lists. We work hard to keep class lists up to date, quickly removing people who withdraw, or who miss 3 classes without apologising. This lets us invite people from the top of the waiting list. Sadly, it's not possible to invite everyone, so if your name is on a waiting list, don't attend class on the 'off chance' you can get in. This is not how it works and you will be disappointed to be turned away.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

All members of Bayside U3A will be invited to attend the 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held at the Beaumaris Community Hall, 84 Reserve Road, Beaumaris (behind the Council Library) on Thursday 21st March 2024 at 12pm. A light lunch will follow the meeting.

Documents for the meeting will be available on the AGM page of our website in early March 2024. An official 'Notice of Meeting' will be emailed to all members. Those without email will have the relevant documents posted.

Proxy forms for those who are unable to attend in person will be available on the Bayside U3A website or from the Beaumaris and Brighton offices.

Please note that all committee positions fall vacant at this AGM. The Committee consists of:

* President * Vice-President * Secretary * Treasurer * Ordinary Committee Members

A ballot will be held where there is more than one nomination for an executive position or where the total of nominations exceeds the approved number of Ordinary Committee Members.

In early March, attendees will be able to register online. Advice on the registration of apologies will be in the email. If you have any questions about the AGM or Committee membership, please email baysideu3a@gmail.com - attention The Secretary or any other current officer of Bayside U3A.

Please join our private members group
Facebook page



- Have your membership number ready
- Open Facebook
- Find **Bayside U3A Members Group**
- Click on Join Group
- OR click on this link: [Join FB](#)

BAYSIDE U3A GOVERNANCE AND POLICIES

As reported in the December 2023 Newsletter under 'Bayside U3A Governance and Policies', the Model Rules have been updated and reissued by the Victorian Consumer Affairs Department.

The Committee reviewed the new rules and has agreed to adopt them in the interim, pending final approval at the AGM in March. The updated rules have now been uploaded to the Bayside U3A website under the 'About Us, Governance and Policies' tabs.

Chris Birch (Secretary Bayside U3A)

VOLUNTEERS 'THANKYOU' EVENT**MONDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2023**

It was wonderful to see 82 tutors, committee members and volunteers attending the 'Thank You' party at the Hampton RSL on Monday 4th December. Some sat, some stood, everyone mingled and chatted to many members they had never met before.



The fruit platters abounded alongside volumes of fresh finger food being served Thai style.

Ann Swiers took out an impromptu Best Dressed award for her Christmas getup!

A sincere thank you to everyone who volunteered for our club in any capacity during 2023! Whether you volunteer as an act of kindness; moment of selflessness; expression of engagement and advocacy; personal growth or giving back to the community and helping people in need, we honour you.

A reminder that you can volunteer for a range of activities by registering your specific interest/skills at [AAVOL: VOLUNTEERING](https://www.aavol.org.au/volunteering). This will assist us to keep a record of and enable easy contact to those who have kindly volunteered. Or express your interest by email to baysideu3a@gmail.com or call the office on 9589 3798.

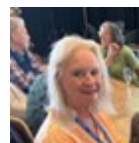
**HAPPY HOUR****FRIDAY 29TH DECEMBER 2023****Convenor : Karen Hall**

The festive season parties continued into late December with 42 members attending the final Happy Hour at the Hampton RSL on Friday 29th December.

We met several new members on the night – welcome to all!



Beginners luck with the RSL meat raffle AGAIN ... first time at Happy Hour :
Jennie Padley drew a winning ticket as did Ursula Nesci.



Another surprise on the night was the exodus of the Thai bistro chef which meant that we had to go elsewhere for dinner. Hopefully a new chef will be engaged very soon.

If you would like to receive a reminder email closer to the day, please enrol in **Bayside U3A Happy Hour course: 24SOC004**

Course code: 24SOC004 Bayside U3A Happy Hour

Happy New Year everyone!



U3A BEAUMARIS WINE APPRECIATION GROUP (WAG) RAFFLE

In November last year, the Beaumaris Wine Appreciation Group (WAG) organised a raffle to raise funds for Bayside Community Emergency Relief (BCER). Prizes were drawn at their Christmas break-up party, which was a lot of fun.

BCER is a volunteer-run, community-driven charity whose mission is to empower people experiencing hardship and tragedy, by helping provide requested emergency aid supplies when disaster arises.

More than 25 amazing prizes were obtained from local businesses, from local businesses, restaurants and shops, as well as generous donations from U3A members and friends. Sally Mort, WAG's Tutor, said she was very happily surprised at how willing the local traders were to help, and also the participation of members in helping sell tickets. The raffle raised more than \$1,000 towards providing aid for people in less fortunate circumstances.



Sally Mort and Deb Brook at the WAG raffle draw.

Deb Brook, the founder of BCER, came along to the Christmas party and explained how the charity worked. She said the funds raised would help many people in the Bayside Community and was very grateful for Bayside U3A's efforts. Deb helped to draw out the winning raffle tickets, along with Sally and her helpers, Damaris and Mardi.

Deb and Sally were very happy with the result and already, rumours of a similar possibly larger raffle being held next year, are out and about!

Coordinated by Sally Mort



BAYTONE SINGERS presented a Christmas Concert for the Day Club at Highett RSL in December 2023. It was so exciting to be back performing, after three years.

Our repertoire included Christmas songs which the choir enjoy singing, inviting the audience to join in. It was a very joyous and fun occasion enjoyed by everyone. Many members enjoyed a coffee or lunch in the dining room afterwards, relaxing and chatting together.

Thank you to accompanist Mary Downie who valiantly brought her keyboard and to Rodger Smith who looked after the conductor's music stand.

Jill Page OAM Conductor and Tutor.



HAPPY HOUR FRIDAY 26TH JANUARY 2024 Convenor : Karen Hall



In competition with the AO tennis and Australia Day holiday, surprisingly 44 people attended the first Happy Hour for the year at the Hampton RSL on Friday 26th January. Once again we had several new members on the night – welcome to all!

This time congratulations went to Barry Podger who won a large roast lamb dinner platter in the raffle.

A small group of us ventured to a Thai restaurant in Hampton Street for dinner. Hopefully we can stay on for dinner at the RSL next month. Next Happy Hour is Friday 23rd February.

If you would like to receive a reminder email closer to the day, please enrol in Bayside U3A

[Happy Hour course: 24SOC004.](#)



DAY TOURS**Organiser : Joan Gibbs**

A great start to the New Year with a magnificent Day at Blue Lotus Water Gardens in Yarra Valley

Our 2024 Winery Tours include :
 Wednesday 19th June to the Yarra Valley
 Wednesday 17th July to Macedon
 Wednesday 21st August to Mornington.



We will be announcing extra TOURS as these are very popular.

Joan Gibbs 0417 768 433 joanlgibbs37@gmail.com

SPEAKER SERIES RETURNS IN 2024 (Convenor: John Nurse)

Next Speaker Session, 2pm Wednesday 20th March at Bayside U3A

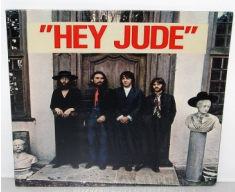
CRIME WITH A TWIST OF HISTORY :***A Journey from Librarian to Published Crime Writer***

After thirty-five years as a teacher-librarian, **Laraine Stephens** threw off her pink twinset, tartan skirt, string of pearls, sensible shoes and 400 denier tights to find out what life was like on the other side of the bookshelves. Donning a tracksuit and moccasins, she was primed to write crime fiction! Not just everyday crime fiction, but historical crime fiction set in Melbourne in the aftermath of the Great War and during the heady days of the 1920s, when gangs, bootleg liquor and gambling dens inhabited the back streets of Melbourne.

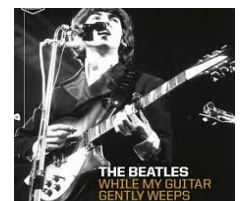
In her talk, Laraine will describe her journey to becoming a published author with a six-book contract with Level Best Books (USA). She will discuss how she combined her love of crime fiction and history, along with the skills she acquired in her professional life, to depict historically accurate and lively settings for her Reggie da Costa Mysteries.

**EXPLORING MEANING IN THE BEATLES LYRICS****Tutor : Bob Mason**

Our Beatles class has now had 4 years under the belt and we are working through the White Album (1968). After a brief introduction into the philosophy and practice of History and its applicability to the Beatles, we begin with 'Cry Baby Cry'.



This term's highlights will be 'Hey Jude' and 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps', songs that expose an enormous depth of interest. As usual, our focus will be on the lyrics, what the Beatles said about them, and the meanings they did not disclose but which become apparent through historicisation and analysis. We will also run at least one session in which we explore the vast collection of 'Hey Jude' tribute songs.



Another highlight this year will be a multi-session '1969 dance party' - 1969 is arguably the high point in Western music, thanks in large part to the Beatles (my personal second-favourite year is 1971!).

New participants need not worry about missing the bulk of the Beatles' music because, once we've scanned their career from beginning to end, we will cycle back to the beginning.

Enrol in **[Exploring Meaning in the Beatles Lyrics Course : 24MUS001](#)**

LAWN BOWLS**Convenor : Rob Coulson**

Absolute Beginners and Intermediates arrived ready for a challenging and fun year and it was pleasing to see so much positivity on the green. With all three greens at Hampton available, we were able to provide specialist coaching to the different groups.

Our first objective for the Absolute Beginners is to concentrate on achieving a smooth and effective delivery of the bowl, whilst the Intermediates move on to some specific skills.

Over tea/coffee afterwards, the coaches were pleased with the progress, even in the bowls match the students enjoyed!



It's not too late to join us on Wednesdays at 10am, since we have all year to reach perfection!

Enrol at [Lawn Bowls Absolute Beginners Course : 24FITS06](#) or [Lawn Bowls Intermediate Course : 24FITS07](#)

WANT A GREAT DAY OUT?

.....then join the Bayside U3A Happy Gardening group for an exciting venture to the Blue Lotus WaterGardens in the beautiful Yarra Valley.
on Wednesday 27th March 2024



We depart from Dendy Park, Breen Street Brighton at 9.30am sharp (at the car park near toilets)
Returning approximately : 4.30pm

Cost \$65 which includes coach, entry and lunch... and a safe return home.

We have a 57 seat coach and an excellent patient driver who has been driving us on our trips since 2008!

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE PHONE:

ANN SWIERS: 0402 073 812 or ANNE FORSYTH: 0418 337 053

We'd love you to join us and you are welcome to bring a friend.

Spanning over 14 acres (50,000 square meters) in size the tropical-themed gardens contain more than 40 different ponds, lakes and water features which produce the biggest display of lotus and waterlily flowers in the southern hemisphere. The grounds also contain an amazing array of exotic plants, garden exhibits, fountains, waterfalls, floral sculptures, walks and scenic vistas.

Over the past 20 years Geoff Cochrane (owner of the gardens) has collected seed of these beautiful plants during many expeditions to Northern Australia. The seed is then germinated in experimental ponds at Mossman, Queensland before the mature plants are relocated to their Kakadu Lagoon display which makes up part of our Tropical World complex. The featured varieties you will see on display include: Gigantea Waterlily, Immutabilis Waterlily and Violacea Waterlily, Cape York Lotus and Waltzing Matilda Lotus. All these native beauties have been selected for their showy long-lasting flowers.

From late March until mid-April the garden gets a fresh burst of colour provided by thousands of flowering perennial and annual exotic plants. Throughout the grounds they have planted tens of thousands of non-water plants such as salvias, petunias, impatiens, canna lilies, bougainvillea, hibiscus, sunflowers, iris and many others. It features a great range of cottage flowering perennials including some of the best-looking orange, bronze and yellow perennial sunflowers in the country.



SOCIAL CROQUET

Friday 15th March

Brighton Croquet Club

6 Bleazby Avenue, Brighton

Arrive 4:30pm

Competition 5:00pm sharp

PARTICIPANTS: Max 50

Guests welcome

BYO: Dinner, Drinks and Glasses

PRIZES: Winning Pair

COST: \$15

BOOK/PAY: [Social Croquet Evening Course: 24SOC007](#)

OR E-mail BaysideU3A@gmail.com

OR Phone office **9589 3798**



Bayside U3A Happy Hour

LAST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH

This Month:

Friday 23 February 5pm



25 Holyrood Street, Hampton

FELDENKRAIS - POSSIBLE VERSUS IMPOSSIBLE

Tutor : Marie Arendsen (Physiotherapist & Feldenkrais Practitioner - Retired)

Have you ever had one of those days when everything just clicked? The air smelt sweeter, your feet kissed the ground lightly; the light was brighter, your brain positively buzzed, and everything you did just fell into place perfectly? You had energy and life looked good!

The next day, you would swear someone had changed bodies on you, your brain was fuzzy, nothing was easy: you felt tired and dispirited -life seemed flat. You had swapped the sports car for the rusty old truck!

How is it one day it all seems so easy, and the next, a struggle?

The odds are that we didn't suddenly become more or less fit, more or less intelligent. It is true a car can increase engine capacity, add turbo and the car will most likely become quicker. But how effective is its performance if its hand brake is left on or it is driven by someone who doesn't know how to drive?

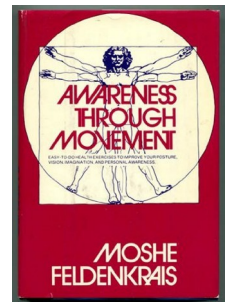
The same applies to us humans. We often limit our potential. We create doubts, fears, beliefs, and habits. Now the thing about a habit is we don't think about it, we just do it, whether it is efficient or useful to not.

Significant, rapid, and lasting performance and ability can be gained, not by doing more, but by doing less. By letting go unnecessary strain, effort and tension, and learning to move more efficiently, we can express our intention in 100% of our capacity.

The key word here is LEARN. But this isn't something we can learn by being shown or reading about it. This is something we must FEEL - **to experience**. This is the realm of kinaesthetic or somatic education—the type of learning addressed by the **Feldenkrais Method**.

This Method uses gentle movements, paying close attention to them. We analyse how we do them and reassemble the movement sequence into a more efficient unified theme.

What is our tendency when we find something difficult? We summon our resolve, use extra effort and try to force our way through the barrier, thus increasing stress.



'If at first we don't succeed, try, try again.' It is part of our culture - the harder we try, the better the person we are perceived to be. Or we give up. There is not much point in practicing over and over again in the hope it will get better, if we didn't get it right in the first place. We are only making sure we are really good at making whatever mistakes we are making.

We organise our actions in ways that are counter-productive, even pain producing. We persist in these inefficiencies because the habits that maintain them grow so strong we are not even aware that other possibilities exist, let alone how to find them.

Rarely do we think of using our physical body as the main way of developing our minds. By improving our ability to make smaller and smaller distinctions, we are becoming more intelligent. By paying attention to systematic movement sequences, we can learn to expand our perception of ourselves and the way we interact with our environment.

By sensing, exploring, and observing our movements, we create a situation where our nervous systems [or brains] will begin to choose movements that feel easier, more enjoyable, and more interesting

And then a funny thing happens! We find what was difficult before, becomes easier now. We feel taller, larger but lighter. We feel an unfamiliar spring in our step; our eyes are sharper; we feel more alert. We feel more like those sports' car days.

The way we move, the way we hold ourselves, are linked to our emotions, our behaviour and potential in our world.

Feldenkrais said : *'The body reflects the attitudes of the mind. Improve the function of the body and you must improve the state of mind.'* And *'Make the impossible, possible, and the possible, easy.'*

Enrol in **Feldenkrais—Magical Movement Course : 24HEA005**

INTRODUCTION TO SCULPTURE**Tutor: Roy Bird****Creations produced between end of 2023 and start of 2024.**

Flower and Insects in Resin by Carol



Female Diver: Paper and Concrete by Julie



Female Plaster on Metal Tray by Jennifer



Mosaic Sea Dragon in Resin by Roy



Little Critters Air dried Clay by Julie

BAYSIDE U3A WRITERS GROUP 2024**Convenor: Dr Cheryl Threadgold****Word of the month : DANCE****YANA-BUL NGAREE-DHA:****YOU ARE DANCING by Jan Storey © 2023**

They're at the sliding door again. Five of them this time. The pitiful begging calls of the juvenile amongst them has sent the male magpie into a frenzy. He is running frantically up and down the deck, looking through the window, willing someone to open the fridge and help him feed his family.

Compared to many other native bird species that rely on a single food source, the Australian Magpie *Gymnorhina tibicen* has fared reasonably well since European settlement. Being generalists, they consume a variety of foods, some of which is now provided by humans, including mince (preferably without preservatives), and a favourite of those at my door, grated cheese.

In the magpie world, the male does not court with dance or song. It's the female that does the work of attracting a mate. It can take her several attempts to get her chosen male's attention as he may be too occupied defending his territory to notice her. From a crouching position on a branch, she spreads her wings and fans her tail feathers before moving them rapidly from side to side.

The male's constant need to protect his territory has probably led to the female of the species taking responsibility for nest building. For the outer layer she selects a variety of material from plants growing in the area and lines the inner nest with softer material such as feathers and grasses. She keeps the nest scrupulously clean, removing any debris at least twice weekly.

Generally, the clutch size is from two to five eggs, depending on factors such as weather conditions and food availability.

The average life span of magpies is twenty to twenty-five years. Given that they are a territorial bird, I cannot help but wonder whether my magpies' ancestors once observed the Boonwurrung people. If so, it would be ten to twelve magpie generations ago. The Ricketts Point area was a gathering place for the Boonwurrung, especially during the months of November to February. Fresh water was available from a spring and there was an abundance of food. Perhaps my magpies' ancestors watched members of the Ngaruk Wilam clan gather ochre at Beaumaris and paint circle patterns around their eyes in preparation for a night of energetic dancing back lit by a large fire.

Had my magpies' ancestors been present in the 1830s, they may from a lofty position in a Coastal Manna Gum, borne witness to a group of Boonwurrung women making their customary journey along the Bayside track just as their ancestors had done before them. Tragically, for possibly all of the women, this was to be their last journey as they were kidnapped at Point Nepean by sealers and taken to the Furneaux Islands in Bass Strait.

As I ponder the dreadfulness of this, my day-dreaming is interrupted by the beautiful carolling of one of the magpies. If I could interpret the song, I suspect I'm being urged to snap out of it and hurry up with the food.

Resources:

Kaplan Gisela, *Australian Magpie*, 2nd edition, CSIRO Publishing, 2021

Briggs Carolyn, *The Journey Cycles of the Boonwurrung*, VACL, 2008

FLIRTATION by Vivienne Player ©2023

Dance with me,
I feel your breath on my cheek,
One day you will take me
to the brink...

These days
I am much obsessed by you,
seeing my own skull
beneath my skin.

In your arms
I will surrender - fall -
into that good night.

I dream I may go gently,
not rage, rage,
as the light dies.

It's OK

for I am half in love with you -
easeful Death.
For all our pain
you offer
the ultimate salve.

Life led me once
through many numbers:
quickstep and tango,
pasa doble, rock 'n roll ...

Now, an end to the revels:
The strut and fret!

I feel the touch of your hand,
now I have attracted
your attention.

Ours will be no danse macabre:
It's music
has its own strange sweetness.

When the hour arrives,
guide me once more around the floor -
good dancers make good lovers -
Hold me close
and waltz me
(for you shall have your dominion)
to my end of time.

'Ora,' whisper kindly, *'nulla più'*

LAGOON by Geoffrey Dobbs © 2023

Sorrel rusts a winter sky;
the horizon hints at vastness.
Then the reed bed whispers,
its faded silver heads
bow to a slow breath,
that passes like a long sigh.

Above the reeds
a lone swamp harrier skates
in slow, sweeping curves;
then swoops.

Stark tea-trees join skeletal limbs
in a danse macabre
through black water.

A wallaby watches me warily
until I approach too close,
and tug some invisible thread of fear.
Alarmed, it departs
with a slow, loping hop.

Our worlds have met each other;
we each go our own ways,
curious, but alone.

DUSK by Norman Beck © 2023

When reflecting on our Pacific cruise, I think of Anne and what may have become of her. We often dined with Anne and her husband, Henry. They befriended us, though we never exchanged email addresses or surnames.

Our ship was four days out from Acapulco, determinedly heading for Nuka Hiva. I was sitting on the stern deck, musing between reading and watching the crystalline wake, waiting for the sunset. Anne came up, Gin and Tonic in hand and asked,

‘Mind if I plonk myself down?’

‘Not at all, I’d be delighted,’ I said, grateful for the company and the interruption.

‘Where’s Henry?’ I asked. It was strange not seeing them together.

‘Oh, he’s having a rest, building up his energy. He wants to make it to dinner tonight and the show.’

There was a pause as we watched the trailing wake. Time and conversations have a way of distorting when there is nothing but the immensity of the sky and the endlessness of the ocean for days on end. There was not even enough wind to break the surface of the water.

‘Actually, he’s not that well. The gastro going around has hit him hard. Henry gets maudlin at these times; he keeps talking about making it to New Zealand and reconciling with his sons. He’s not wanting forgiveness, just an understanding.’

From our past dinner conversations, I knew both had walked away from their families. Henry, fifty-odd years ago, had gone to the UK in his mid-twenties. Through work, he met Anne’s older brother, Pat, and lodged at their parents’ house. Although there was a ten-year age difference, Henry and Anne intuitively knew they had something special, joking and conversing as two entwined souls. Anne’s parents found the relationship odd.

Henry and Pat went to Europe for a vacation and their friendship fell apart after arguing over a trivial incident. Henry was lost, finished his holiday, returned to New Zealand, and married. Anne felt abandoned, studied, started a career, and married. For separate reasons, both marriages spiralled into lovelessness. They harboured regret, with thoughts in the back of their minds: *What if; was that person supposed to be the one?*

Thirty-five years later, Pat tracked down and contacted Henry, tidying up loose ends, and agreeing to catch up. Unfortunately, Pat didn’t survive. When Henry visited Pat’s parents to offer condolences, he was speechless when Anne answered the door. The shock and relief at seeing her again and the electrifying emotions were overwhelming, and both wanted the years to fade away. Over the following week, they met daily, cocooned from reality, leaving nothing unsaid.

It was Anne who took the decisive step. Her son and his new wife were around for dinner, and she heard the same abuse and belittlement she had excused for over thirty years. As Anne said, ‘What struck me the hardest was I’d raised what I most detested. I wanted to scream and break the cycle of humiliation.’ The next day, she packed three suitcases, hailed a cab and left. Within a week, Anne was on a flight to New Zealand with Henry.

‘These days at sea, when there is nothing but this vastness, the ocean I mean, it brings on a form of madness, doesn’t it? Do they call it *agoraphobia* or something?’

‘Yes, my wife feels it. It’s called *thalassophobia*.’

‘Oh, don’t be a smarty pants, I’ll never remember that, Norman.’ ‘You know, I think this will be a two G&T sunset.’ Anne caught the waiter’s attention.

‘I’m glad I found you here. I needed fresh air after spending time cooped up with Henry in our cabin. Besides, I wanted someone to talk to, someone I can trust.’

More silence. We watched the wake, languished in the equatorial heat, marvelling at the yellow, red and purple banded glow in the dimming light.

‘Do you know it was worth taking the chance? I mean running off with Henry. We’ve had fifteen wonderful years.’

‘Oh, I’m sure you’ll have twenty-five more,’ I offered, as people do to cheer others up.

‘No, Henry only has a year or two. But we’re making the most of it. Reconciling with his sons is the priority. He wants that for me; bless him. Then another cruise.’

‘And what of your family? Any chance to reconnect?’

Continued overleaf...

'Well, one can always hope, but I suspect not. You know how it usually works in a marriage. You're drawn or pulled to one family or the other. For us, it was my husband's side. When my parents passed, I had no one except a distant aunt who had emigrated decades ago. "But what about your son's wife?"

'No, unfortunately, a mousey thing, but I did like her. See, Norman, when I left, I took everything of importance to my husband.'

'Which was?'

'Power and control; without it, he felt he'd lost everything, including respect. So, he turned vindictive and set about poisoning his whole family against me. You know, "She was always irresponsible, stupid, heartless, didn't care about the family, thought she was better, she's made her own bed ..." Anything anyone would nod their head at.'

'Oh well, I'm sure it will all work out.'

'Yes, and I wouldn't change a thing. Such freedom and love,' said Anne radiantly. Then more seriously, 'I just couldn't go on. Funds are tight, but there is enough.'

'Well, it's time for dinner.' I suggested.

'Yes, and I'll have a glass of wine, then another G&T. I suspect I'll be lightheaded by the end of the evening. Perhaps even have a dance.' Anne laughed in her carefree manner.

The last time I saw her, we were in Auckland for our day tour. She was pushing Henry in a wheelchair, with a mixed look of fear and resolution. When she recognised me, a faint smile lit her face. She whispered as I leant in to kiss her on the cheek, saying 'goodbye' and wishing her the best: 'Norman, I remember our conversation at dusk. You know it's been a magnificent cruise. I'm afraid of the coming loneliness, but it's been worth it.'

I knew exactly what she meant, though I could offer no further comfort.

